

**“ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: BE WORTHY OF TRUST”**  
**REMARKS BY RADM MARK L. TIDD, CHC, USN, CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS**  
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I'd like to thank MCPON Stevens, for a number of things: First, for his personal and professional commitment to ethical leadership. Second, for his friendship—it's always good to have a friend in the Pentagon. And third, for his kind invitation to join you today. I deeply appreciate this opportunity.

One of your recurring themes has been “Zeroing in on Excellence” through developing leaders, maintaining good order and discipline, and controlling what you own.

I'd like to follow up on that theme and share a few thoughts with you on the topic: “Ethical Leadership: Be Worthy of Trust.”

On frocking letters, you find words something like these:

“Your appointment carries with it the obligation that you exercise increased authority and willingly accept greater responsibility. Occupying now a position of greater authority, you must strive with a renewed dedication toward the valued ideal of service with honor.”

As Chief of Chaplains, it's my privilege and duty to advise the Secretary of the Navy, the CNO, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard on all matters related to the free exercise of religion. That includes the spiritual, moral, and ethical implications of policies and actions.

So I've always been very interested in that sacred trust that the American people have bestowed on each one of us, and I believe it's inescapably tied to the whole field of professional ethics.

Some of you may be familiar with Stephen Covey as the author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. His son—also named Stephen—wrote a book a few years ago entitled *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*. In that book he writes these words:

“One thing is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy, and civilization throughout the world—one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. That one thing is trust.”

What that means for us is that good leadership requires leaders who can be trusted. Or another way of saying it: good leadership requires leaders to be worthy of trust.

Regardless of our rank, as leaders in the Navy, the American people—and indeed even the world—trust each one of us to live up to the oath we swore to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Nation whose course it directs.

Leaders are given authority commensurate with their responsibility: the greater the responsibility, the greater the authority, and the greater the accountability.

I believe that leaders who are worthy of the trust implied by that authority demonstrate at least three traits:

1. they are **professionally competent** to the highest degree;
2. they have **impeccable character and integrity**;
3. they are **servant-leaders**.

These are three traits that we must possess in order to be leaders that young Sailors want to follow, to emulate, and to become.

**First, leaders who are worthy of trust are *professionally competent to the highest degree*.**

Several years ago, I had the privilege of spending a year as a student at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico. While there, I spent a lot of time reading in ethics. I discovered the book *War, Morality, and the Military Profession*. It's a collection of essays from a number of writers on the subject of ethics.

There was one essay in particular that struck me: "The Military in the Service of the State," by Sir John Winthrop Hackett. He made the case that there is a special moral and ethical imperative for the soldier—for any military person—to be as professionally competent as possible. I know that's a blinding flash of the obvious. Military leaders at all levels make decisions that can have life—and death—consequences.

That's of course true in combat, and some of you may have made decisions like this.

But combat is not the only place where peoples' lives are at stake. Life at sea can be a dangerous place, whether it's responding to natural disasters, or to a mishap at sea, or conducting training that's realistic and challenging. There are countless times when you have to make decisions that involve danger. At those times, your professional competence can be the critical factor between life and death.

So there is a moral imperative for a leader to be as professionally competent as possible. That's why our Navy places such a high value on training, education, and experience—it's a matter of life and death.

But while competence is essential—it's not enough.

**So, second—leaders who are worthy of trust are people of *impeccable character*.**

Imagine a matrix of four squares. The horizontal axis is competence, and the vertical axis is character.

HIGH CHARACTER	<b>Won't last</b>	<b>Ideal</b>
LOW CHARACTER	<b>Won't last</b>	<b><i>Danger!</i></b>
	LOW COMPETENCE	HIGH COMPETENCE

- If you have someone who combines low competence with low character, they probably won't last very long in the organization. They just don't have the skills.
- If you have someone who combines low competence with high character, while this may be a good person, that person probably won't last long either. Again, they just don't have the skills.
- If you have someone who combines high competence and low character: **Danger!** That person is skilled, but does not have the character to use those skills for the good of the organization and others. This combination is corrosive to an organization.
- If you have someone who combines high competence with high character: that's the ideal, where we can truly zero in on excellence. As leaders, we want every Sailor we mentor to reach that ideal.

Character—marked by integrity—is crucial. Our character matters.

Ethics is a set of legally permissible standards or principles that guide individuals and organizations to make the right decision over the wrong one.

Retired Vice Admiral Tom Kilcline wrote an article in *Proceedings* a few years ago [July 2010] entitled "The Whole Sailor." In that article he said, "Character is the very foundation of decision-making in the Navy." He said that making ethical decisions is one of the most important things we must do. And the higher we go in our service to the Nation and to the Navy, the tougher those decisions are going to be. He said that ethical leaders are critical to operational readiness. By the way, they also account for the legacy of excellence within the Chiefs' Mess.

If we are to be leaders of consistent character, we need to act consistently in accordance with the letter and spirit of the law and our Core Values and the Navy Ethos; we need to uphold high standards and insist on mutual accountability to those high standards; and we need to accept the consequences—the cost—of standing up for what's right.

A story is attributed to Charles Harrington, the CEO of Parsons, a large engineering firm. He tells a story of a major league baseball team playing its last regular season game of the year. If they win, they advance to the playoffs. If they lose, they watch the playoffs on TV.

In the last inning of the game, the team captain steps to the plate with the score tied and a man on first and no outs. The right thing for him to do is to lay down a sacrifice bunt to move the runner into scoring position. However, if the captain gets one more base hit for season, he'll earn a huge bonus.

So what does he do? What would we do?

The team captain laid down the sacrifice bunt. He is thrown out—but his team goes on to win the game and advance to the playoffs.

A reporter who was aware of what was at stake for the team captain asked the manager how he convinced the player “to do what was right.” The manager replied, “We foster an atmosphere where the question of deviating from doing the right thing doesn't even arise.”

Put another way: That team had an ethos—much like our own. You might recall the last sentence of our Navy Ethos:

“Integrity is the foundation of our conduct; respect for others is fundamental to our character; decisive leadership is crucial to our success.”

Integrity is when our speech and actions are consistent. Not just while on duty, but off duty as well. When we take the uniform off at the end of the day, we need to keep our honor and personal integrity on, even when we think no one is watching. We are leaders in the Navy at all times. With leadership comes public and private accountability, responsibility and authority. We cannot deceive ourselves into thinking we can get away with abusing the power of our offices for personal gain.

Unfortunately, we've known of leaders at all levels who knew better but who failed to maintain healthy boundaries—who crossed the line and were engulfed by moral failure. And lives have been ruined—their own and others.

Leaders in the Navy know that our words and actions never go unnoticed. Sailors and their families are looking to us for a good example of a trustworthy leader. So when you “control what you own,” you lead by example.

If you were the senior Quartermaster of a ship at sea—even with all of the electronic and satellite-navigation gear ships now have—would you even think about getting the ship underway without a compass that had been carefully calibrated to tell you where true north is?

Now I get GPS, and I rely on it extensively. But I've also learned—yes, the hard way—the value of having a good set of maps in my car, just in case.

Each one of us needs to have a reliable moral compass. You will probably not be surprised to hear that for me it is the Bible. Each one of us needs to ask ourselves, “What is my moral compass?” A moral compass is a system of principles that informs or shapes our conscience, our

mind, our heart, and guides us in making decisions. It helps us recognize what is morally right and what is wrong.

Let me let you in on a secret: rules will never replace character. If our conscience and mind and heart are not properly oriented—properly trained or calibrated—to point to true North, or if we fail to follow what we know is true North, we will drift off course. We will run aground.

In Vice Admiral Kilcline's article that I mentioned earlier, he addressed why leaders play a key role in the moral and spiritual dimensions of their Sailors. He described a discussion at a Naval Air Forces O-5 Commander's Conference about why good people choose to do the wrong things, and how a commanding officer can motivate people to choose honorable actions and develop the character and integrity of Sailors. He said that 80% of the COs present believed that they had a role to play in teaching integrity; interestingly, 20% remained convinced that their role was one of simply enforcing the rules. Despite the varied opinions, there was agreement that by setting an example, by demonstrating consistency among words, actions, and beliefs, COs generate trust with their people.

But the point that Vice Admiral Kilcline made is that rules and regulations are not enough. He used the example of the Great Wall of China. Within 100 years of its completion, the country was invaded three times. Now the Great Wall was never breached or overrun. Instead, the enemy bribed the gate guards.

Training our Sailors in leadership is important. But we cannot overlook the importance and value of mentoring to develop leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior in their dealings with others. As leaders, you have a *critical role* in ensuring your Sailors get the mentoring they need, and that they understand professional boundaries. Your mentorship directly translates into maintaining good order and discipline within your commands, including in critical areas like sexual assault and other forms of misconduct. Character and integrity have great impact on the readiness and resilience of your command, and the ability to maintain good order and discipline.

Every day we face ethical choices, dilemmas and decisions. At many or more likely all levels of leadership, the choices may be excruciatingly difficult. But in general, the difficult choices end up making life easier, and the easy choices end up making life more difficult.

The question for all of us is: can we be trusted? Can we be trusted to stand up and do the right thing, and not just what is popular? Will we be loyal to the truth and to one another?

Theodore Roosevelt said—

“In a moment of decision, the *best* thing you can do is the *right* thing to do. The *worst* thing you can do is *nothing*.”

As leaders, we must ensure that we have a moral compass. We must ensure it is properly calibrated. And then we must direct our lives according to that compass.

**Third and finally—leaders who are worthy of trust must be *servant-leaders*.**

I believe this links directly to what Vice Admiral Moran, our Chief of Naval Personnel, just spoke about when he spoke of the virtue of humility—of humble leadership. Among other things, that means we must be committed to the growth and success of others. It means being leaders who are committed to *serving*. After all, isn't that why we call this "the Service?"

It means being committed to serving others before ourselves—serving our Nation, our Navy, the people of our command. It means serving our family. For many it means, above all else, serving God.

It means considering each day the impact we make on others and asking ourselves whether we have positively affected the course of someone's life today.

Our Navy has very high standards. We need leaders who will be *trustworthy*—worthy of a great and sacred trust.

As leaders who are worthy of such trust and responsibility and authority, each one of you has proven—

- to be a person of the highest **professional competence**...
- to be a person of **impeccable character and integrity**...
- to be a **servant-leader**.

As your Chief of Chaplains and on behalf of every senior leader, I want you to know: We support you in your challenges.

Thank you, and may God bless each one of you.